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AUTHOR Weeks, Bill
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ABSTRACT

Materials are provided for "Maytown In-Basket," a case study in agricultural leadership. This activity is described as one in which students in the agricultural education undergraduate leadership course at the Oklahoma State University are placed in the role of director of a rural rehabilitation district. Ten "in-basket" items are provided. The teacher is directed to tell the director/student to respond to each item, that is, students are not to tell what they would do, but are to do it. The activity is intended to be completed by individual students; a 1-week time limit is recommended. The packet consists of these materials: an instruction sheet, background information sheets on the Maytown community, biographical sketches of the director and key employees, and the "in-basket" items. The goals for the activity are to discover general management principles through problem solving, to examine one's own management style, and to plan applications of management principles. These issues are considered in the exercises: employment of ex-convicts to work around young people; public official's acceptance of gifts and tax write-off gifts; responsibility for the financial situations or moral behavior of employees; responsiveness to pressure from religious or minority groups and to political pressure; responsibility to enforce the law; and dealing with adverse publicity. (YLB)

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Maytown In-Basket

Bill Weeks
Department of Agricultural Education
Oklahoma State University

INTRODUCTION:

Maytown In-Basket is a case study in agricultural leadership. The student is placed in the role of director of a rural rehabilitation district. While away from the office, ten items turn up in the "in" basket. The student must respond to each item as if they were the director. The in-basket items include issues such as public perception, policy determination, conflict management, and team building. Maytown In-Basket is a variation of "Hampshire In-Basket" by J. W. Pfeiffer in A Handbook of Structural Experiences for Human Relations Training, Vol. II.

Students are to place themselves in the position of Michael Marzella, Executive Director of the Maytown Rural Rehabilitation District. The Maytown RRD is a hypothetical agency that is attempting to further the economic development of the greater Maytown community. Students are provided background information and ten "in-basket" items. They are to respond to each item in their in-basket.

HOW IT WORKS:

Students in the Ag Ed undergraduate leadership course at OSU participate in this activity as a regular class assignment. Maytown In-Basket is included in a packet of supplemental materials which students purchase at a local copy shop. The full Maytown In-Basket includes background information sheets on the Maytown community, a list of personnel, biographical sketches of key employees, and ten "in-basket" items. Students are to respond to each in-basket item, and are to respond as if they are the director of the RRD. For each item students should not tell what they would do, they do it. If they choose to write a letter to the Mayor of Maytown about his wife's appointment to the Advisory Board, then they actually write the letter and sign their name.

I assign the activity and allow students one week to complete the ten items. The following week we discuss each item and the students' responses. A class of 15 - 20 students will need at least an hour to discuss all ten items.

In group discussion the following issues should be considered:

1. As a public official can you accept gifts?
2. Are you responsible for the moral behavior of your subordinates?
3. How responsive should organizations be to pressure from minority groups?
4. Should you employ ex-convicts to work around young people?
5. Are you responsible for the financial situations of your employees?
6. What is your responsibility to enforce the law?
7. How responsive should you be to pressure from religious groups?
8. To what degree should you be influenced by political pressure?
9. How do you deal with negative publicity?
10. Can you accept tax-write off gifts?

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RESULTS:

Students in my class enjoy the activity because it involves real life situations. It creates a great deal of class discussion and involves everyone because each student has been placed in the same role. Students have commented that they learned the most by listening to how others have responded to each in-basket item. Students have been quick to admit that they couldn't see the "big picture" until they discussed each item in class. Additionally, they are made aware of the fact that there may be more than one way to interpret each in-basket item.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS:

The activity seams to work best when completed by individual students. When small groups are used, students have a tendency to divide up the in-basket items and investigate only the letters they choose.

Items of the In-Basket can be rewritten to place the student in the role of Agricultural Science/Education Teacher, Cooperative Extension Agent, etc.

Fewer than ten items can be used for a shorter version of the activity.

Conduct the activity in pairs or teams.

REFERENCES:

Pfeiffer, J.W. and Jones, J.E. (1974). Hampshire In-Basket, A Handbook of Structural Experiences for Human Relations Training (Vol. II, page 41) San Diego, CA, University Associates.

MAYTOWN IN-BASKET

An Agricultural Leadership Activity

Bill Weeks
Department of Agricultural Education
Oklahoma State University

IN-BASKET INSTRUCTION SHEET

Place yourself in the position of Michael Marzella, Executive Director of the Maytown Rural Rehabitation District (RRD). Respond to the ten items in your in-basket accordingly.

Do not tell what you would do, do it. If you choose to write a letter to the Mayor of Maytown about his wife's appointment to the Advisory Board, actually write the letter and sign your name to it.

When you finish a response, fasten it to the In-Basket Item to which it refers.

MAYTOWN IN-BASKET

An Agricultural Leadership Activity

IN-BASKET INSTRUCTIONS

Place yourself in the position of Michael Marzella, Executive Director of the Maytown Rural Rehabitation District (RRD). Respond to the ten items in your in-basket accordingly.

Do not tell what you would do, do it. If you choose to write a letter to the Mayor of Maytown about his wife's appointment to the Advisory Board, actually write the letter and sign your name to it.

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IN-BASKET BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET

The Maytown Rural Rehabilitation District

Maytown, a community of 5,000, is located in the agriculturally-rich state of Calvin. Although Maytown's agricultural base is greatly diversified, it is best known for its vegetable farms and orchards. German, Polish, and Irish farmers settled the area and their ancestors have been community leaders (town council, county commissioners, school board, etc.) Ethnic influences are still felt in the local churches, communities, and schools.

Once drawn by seasonal work at the Del Monte canning factory, many Hispanics have made Maytown their home over the years and make up about 20% of the local population. Maytown suffered greatly in the 1980s as the farm economy deteriorated and many agricultural businesses and farmers went bankrupt. Del Monte has since closed its doors. In 1972 Maytown was the first resettlement location for refugees of the Vietnam and Cambodian Wars. Although unwelcome at first, the Asian immigrants are now tolerated by most of the community.

In 1984, a 10,000 acre lake was constructed by the Army Corp of Engineers as a watershed to protect downstream towns from flooding and as water source for the communities of Maytown and Derkins. It was hoped a lake, the development it would encourage, and the tourism it would bring, could help Maytown's struggling economy. Maytown's population had declined over the last 20 years, but has increased slightly the last few years as some retirement communities have sprung up along the lake.

You were chosen Executive Director of the Rural Rehabilitation District two years ago after the former Executive Director, a retired state legislator and native of Maytown, was suddenly paralyzed by a stroke. He has been in the position only eleven months and had been the first Executive Director for the RRD during its initial stages. The RRD is a federally funded pilot program that works to improve the economic condition of the Maytown area. The pilot program combines agencies that deal with rural development. The Soil and Water Conservation office, the FmHA, the forest preserve district, the park district, and the county Cooperative Extension Service, are all contained withing the RRP. This federally funded pilot program is trying to avoid duplication of services and the coordiation of those services by combining the offices into a RRD.

You are Hispanic. You were raised in Davidson, Oklahoma and come from a large family that could be best described as lower-middle class. Your parents have a strong work ethic and are firm believers in education. You have a B.S. degree in Agricultural Education and Enviromental Science from Oklahoma State University and worked for the Minority Recruitment Office while a student. You planned to go on for a master's degree, but your wife became pregnant.

Your advisor heard about this opening in Maytown and suggested that you go for an interview. Although you were better qualified than other applicants, you were also the only Hispanic interviewed and you are well aware that your ethnicity was a deciding factor in your being offered the position. You accepted the position with some reluctance, but you decided that the practical experience in your field would be valuable.

You now plan to stay a third year before returning to school. You wife has accepted a teaching position, and most of her salary will be saved to enable you to return to graduate school full-time. You spent four years with the Cooperative Extension Service following your B.S. and are now 29 years old.

Today is Saturday. You have just returned from an RRD Director's Conference in Washington and, while stopping by the office for your mail, you decided to clean up your "in basket" in preparation for what you know will be an exhausting week.

Your secretary, Donna, is in the outer office, but no other staff member is present. Information about your secretary, your personnel manager, and your director of planning is on the next page. The RRD's main focus is on rural development, conservation, and recreation but you have also become involved in pre-school education and environmental education. You employ an extension forester, two recreational specialists, two nursery school supervisors, a horticulture specialist, a naturalist, an rural development program specialist, and the usual recreational youth center staff.

Secretary to the Director: Donna Sampo

Employed by the former Executive Director, Mrs. Sampo is extremely valuable to you because of her Maytown background and her knowledge of the RRD history. She is a forty-seven year-old widow with a wit as sharp as her secretarial skills. You have always felt very comfortable in dealing with her.

Finance Director: Stan Kennedy

He is forty-two, married, and has two children in high school. His wife's maiden name was May, but all that remains of her formerly wealthy background is expensive tastes. The May family were prominate horse breeders at one time but have lost all but a half-dozen nags and the homestead. Stan came to Maytown to join his uncle's farm management business but neglected his farms to keep up with the social whirl of a promising young bachelor. Two disastrous campaigns for state representative and the death of his uncle finally brought him to a job as a tax accountant until he was hired by the RRD. Stan is reasonably effective in his job but has a great need for ego satisfaction. He was sure he would be appointed Executive Director and had in fact, taken over on his own volition for the three-month period between executive directors.

Recreation Director: John "Johnny" Walker

Johnny is thirty four, and unmarried. He has a B.A. in recreation from Central State University in Hobbes, Calvin. He also has sixteen hours of graduate credit in social work, completed during summers and evenings. Before his present position, he was assistant manager of a feed store, where he worked during the summers of his undergraduate days. His real interest, however, was working for his church, the Church of the Tabernacle, and the area Boy Scout troops, as a volunteer youth group organizer. He has designed and coordinated the construction of a "ropes" course to teach team-building skills and has initiated summer trips to Outward Bound for troubled teenagers. His satisfactions from this volunteer work came through his self-appointed work with rural youth. He is well-known in Maytown for his success in molding "red-neck" boys into productive adolescents. He feels some frustration because his position does not allow him to work closely with the people most affected by the RRD programs.

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #1

July 18, 1991
Box 358
Statesville

Dear Mr. Marzella,

You'll probably think it's funny getting a letter from a guy in prison, but Rev. Kagen our chaplain said it was worth a try.

I have served four years on a ten year sentence for an arson conviction. I was only nineteen and I think I got in with a bad crowd. We was out drinking one night and thought we'd try to scare old man Hamilton by burning down one of his hog sheds. We didn't count on that gas line exploding and burning down his barn, house, and pickup though. We sure didn't think about anyone being in the house. Like I said I was young and stupid and I feel real bad for happened to Mr. Hamilton. Rev. Kagen got ahold of me after I got here and really showed me how to put my life back together. I'll graduate this summer with an associates degree in leisure studies-I guess these four years haven't been a waste after all.

I wish now that I had listened to Johnny Walker when he was telling all of us young guys that we needed an education. He really knows his stuff, even the religion stuff, but I was too interested in my Trans Am and my girlfriend Suzy. Anyway I've matured a lot in the last six years. I think I would like to help young people the way Johnny did and maybe show them how to do more than play pool and drink beer.

I am asking you to consider me for a job with the RRD when I get out if you need any help. I guess there is nothing I'd rather do and could do a better job at.

Yours Truly,

Matt James

IN BASKET ITEM NO. #2

Maytown Super Foods

1200 East Central, Maytown, Calvin
David Fisher - Owner and Manager

July 20, 1991

Michael G. Marzella
Executive Director
Rural Rehabilitation District
120 E. State Street
Maytown, Calvin 70012

Dear Mr. Marzella:

As a man who has a vital interest in the progress of the Maytown area, I wish to express my admiration for the fine work you and your staff are doing for that unfortunate segment of our population. Believe me, as a man who ate lard sandwiches for my school lunch and only finished the third grade, I can appreciate how much a full stomach can mean towards helping children learn.

I have been proud to be a part of your Pre-School Program by supplying you with the most nutritious hot lunch and breakfast foods at a reasonable price as you would find anywhere in this country. I get the pleasure of contributing something worthwhile, while the same time increasing my volume of sales. I would like the opportunity to express my thanks to you in the best way I know how. Please drop by my store and pick up an assortment of cured meats for you and your wife.

Sincerely Yours,

David Fischer

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #3

Irick Grain Storage and Feed

Est. 1861 "**Master Mix Feed**"
Family Owned - Joseph R. Irick, President

July 21, 1991

Michael Marzella
Executive Director
Rural Development Program
120 E. State Street
Maytown, Calvin 70012

Dear Sir:

We understand you employ a Mr. Stanley Kennedy as your Finance Director. We feel you should call Mr. Kennedy's attention to the fact that his account with Irick's is seriously in arrears. There have been no payments of any amount paid to us since April 4, 1991. At that time we informed Mr. Kennedy that any further charges to his account would be unauthorized. In the past two months Mrs. Kennedy has made three unauthorized charge purchases totaling $645.89. This brings their account balance to $4,213.45, or $3,213.00 over their maximum authorization.

As the Kennedy's and Mrs. Kennedy's family have been steady customers since this store was established, we have hesitated to embarrass them by taking the obvious steps; however, we now feel that we have gone beyond our capacity to accept further neglect of this financial responsibility. If substantial payment is not made by August 1, 1991, we will be forced to turn the account over to a collection agency. Thank you for your cooperation.

Your Truly,

Molly C. Irick
Account Supervisor

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #4

Michael Marzella
Supervisor
RRD
120 E. State
Maytown, Calvin

Dear Sir:

I am writing as a concerned Catholic mother. My son Anthony and my daughter Anna attend your outdoor education programs at the Wilderness Center after school and have participated in the summer trips you have sponsored. Many of my friend's children from St Patrick's Parish also attend and they are behind me writing this letter. We feel that the Wilderness Center idea is fine because it gives our children something productive and educational to do and keeps them out of trouble which is important to parents of teenagers. But what we want to know is why your recreation director, Mr. Walker and your assistant director, Miss Beam as well as two maintenance workers, and the girl who is the snack bar waitress all come from the Church of the Tabernacle. We know for a fact that these people invite our children to their church groups and even Sunday school. Miss Beam asked my daughter if she was "saved"! The parents of St Patrick's parish call that religious bias and even though there aren't as many Catholics who go to the Wilderness Center as Protestants, we understood that the RRD was trying to help rural people, not to force them under influence of holy rollers!

The Catholic parents of St Patrick's parish are asking that our civil rights of religious freedom be given to our children. Leave religion out of your outdoor education program and also who you hire to work there. Can't a Catholic girl serve hot dogs and cokes as well as a Church of the Tabernacle girl.

Sincerely Yours,

Sophie Schovanec

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #5

A REMINDER FROM
Donna

TO Mr. Marzella

DATE 7/21/91 TIME 1:00 p.m.

MR./MS. Verne Adams

OF Maytown County Sheriff's Office

PHONE 638-2200

[X] Telephoned	[X] Please Phone
[ ] Called to See You	[ ] Will Call Again
[ ] Returned Your Call	[ ] Important

MESSAGE The chief wants to set a trap for some "crack" dealers he thinks are hanging around the nature center. Wants to plant young detectives among the kids; he thought we could use the FFA kids who are building the trail around the lake.

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #6

Vietnamese-American Alliance

Michael G. Marzella
Executive Director
Rural Development Program
120 E. State Street
Maytown, Calvin

Dear Sir:

As a member of a minority group with the same struggles, hopes, and frustrations as any other minority group, I find it difficult not to resent the fact that Vietnamese have been ignored by such organizations as yours. True, we are much fewer in number than the Black minority or the Hispanic minority, but nevertheless, we daily suffer indignities which the Rural Rehabilitation District is, in theory, attempting to eradicate. Our neglect goes even deeper. Not one man or woman of Vietnamese background has ever been employed by RRD even though many Asian families are below the income level set by your organization as a criteria for hiring. Not a single Vietnamese pre-schooler has been admitted to your Headstart Program, nor has any real attempt been made to make our children feel welcome at your recreation centers.

To favor any one minority group over another is to fail in your purpose, as I see it. Your occupation would be greatly appreciated in the next month when children are preparing to return to school. Vietnamese children have often been the target of ethnic slurs and vicious ethnic "jokes." We all know how cruel children can be. Perhaps RRD could influence the educators of Maytown to shoulder their duty and see that this kind of discrimination be put to a stop. Vietnamese are going to be a part of this community for a long time, and we want some change now!

Sincerely yours,

Cho-Chun Lui

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #7

Michael,

Joe Bickett came in to see me today and offered us some of the equipment from his organic herb farm that folded last fall. Naturally he wants to use it as a tax write-off. We could use the equipment to groom the baseball fields, and build trails around the lake. Margie Leffleman would like the small greenhouse for her class she teaches on vegetable gardening. I don't know if you want to deal with Bickett, of course. Whatever you decide, I told him it would come officially from you.

Stan

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #8

Maytown Daily Eagle

Editor of the Maytown Daily Eagle:

It is my unfortunate duty as a citizen of Maytown, a city of unusual integrity, to alert the good people who make this their home that once again, we have been plundered by one of the devious, greedy organizations who ask our money in the name of Christian charity and then line their own pockets, neglecting those they are alleged to be helping. Such an organziation is the RRD, yet another attempt by the govenment to pacify the underprivileged and allow our consciences to rest while the true plight of the poverty stricken and alienated minority is muffled by the backslapping of self-satisfied administrators of so-called "programs." True, it is a government supported organization and therefore gleans our money through taxes; however we are still in the end, being fleeced of our charitable contributions.

We are not so naive as to miss the fact that the federal government spends wastefully, particularly on such "worthwhile" schemes as RRD. What has RRD done with this bountiful gift of Maytown taxpayers' hard earned money? Has it built teenage centers which would be the pride of this community with every possible piece of equipment and physical facility? Has it provided new classrooms for environmental education and hired the finest, best qualified teachers? Has it even drawn from our local supply of qualified men to make its administrators; men who know and understand the problems to be faced in Maytown? The answer is no, to all points. A brief visit to the Nature Center will reveal that they have been converted from older buildings, probably long since condemned, such as the old Derkins grade school, and are supplied with makeshift equipment and questionable people as staff.

Certainly the children should get a better place of learning than a remodeled barn or the unused corners of Jefferson Junior High. And who are they hiring to assit these children in learning? Not my wife, for example, a college graduate with two years of elementary school experience. No, citizens, the assistant at the Hayloft Nature Center is a woman who has a high school education and had been on welfare before she was hired. Her lack of qualifications is certainly no fault of hers, but they do give RRD an opportunity to pay a much smaller salary to her than they would to my wife. All this is run, not by a local man, but an import from Davidson, Oklahoma, with a fancy education, who they thought would look good in the job because of his ethnicity.

Surely he has no personal interest in Maytown. True, the assistant directors are local men, or at least they've lived here for a few years. Of course one is too busy at cocktail parties to take time to understand those not in his social set. His wife, by the way, never dressed better.

The usual method of milking our tax dollars is through kick-backs from local contractors and wholesale suppliers. I do not have the information at this time to indicate exactly how it is being done, but what we must conclude is that large amounts of Government money are not finding their way to the rural groups RRD is supposed to serve, but to the pockets of RRD administrators. Neighbors of Maytown, are we again too apathetic to root out these spoilers of tax money? Wake up and write your Congressman!

Abe Stein, CPA

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #9

July 19, 1991

Michael Marzella
Executive Director
Rural Development Program
120 E. State Street
Maytown, Calvin

Dear Michael:

JoAnn and I were so pleased that you and Juanita could make it to our Fourth of July Barn Dance this year. It has become a real tradition for us in the past seven years and we were so disappointed last summer when you had to be out of town.

JoAnn was terribly impressed with all you said about the workings of the RRP. She is very big on "causes," you know, and has really taken RRP to heart since the Fourth. I might add that you and Stan Kennedy make quite a team!

Stan informs me that there is an opening on the Advisory Board of RRP beginning in September. I needn't tell you that JoAnn sees that as an ideal way for her to help share in the projects that RRP is accomplishing so well. Of course, her associations with other leading civic groups, etc., could provide a terrific liaison with other county residents who take their civic duties seriously and make RRP all the more effective.

Stan may have already discussed this with you. I'm sure Linda has put the bug in his ear since she and JoAnn are inseparable tennis partners.

Let me know how you think that Advisory Board position is shaping up. You probably have a lot of well qualified people in mind, but it never hurts to put in a plug for the little woman. She has an awful lot of influence as I discovered during two successful County Board campaigns.

Sincerely,

Don Watson

IN-BASKET ITEM NO. #10

Route #1
Razorback Road
Maytown, Calvin
July 18, 1991

Dear Mr. Marzella,

I feel obliged to write to you concerning my niece, Miss Season Dillion. One of your staff members at the Wilderness Center, Bob Besix, who is one of the big shots there, has taken liberties with Miss Dillion and now she finds she is going to have a baby. She has worked at the Wilderness Center for five months as a trail guide, and though she's in charge of a group she isn't much more than a teenager herself. Is this the kind of man you are trusting teenagers with who would take advantage of a young girl after the Center is closed? I realize that it takes two and Season is not all that innocent, but she said she loved him and now he says that it was probably one of the boys who went on one of those weekend trips. Season has turned nineteen and wouldn't be fooling around with those younger boys, even if some of them do look older.

Mr. Marzella, you know that things ain't always easy for us, even when you do get a job. Well Season's mother is sick and can't work and her husband is long gone. If Season can't work with a baby coming, I don't know what they'll do as there are four other children younger in the family. Lord knows I can't take them all in with my husband only getting unemployment money. Her mother wouldn't write to you but I believe that something should be done, and right now about Bob Besix messing around with young girls. You make it clear to him that he has to support that baby.

Yours truly,

Wanda Schneider

Maytown In-Basket

Instructions

Goals:

I. To discover general management principles through problem solving.

II. To examine one's own management style.

III. To plan applications of management principles.

* *Small groups or teams may be used rather than having participants work by themselves.*

Issues to consider:

1. Do you want ex-convicts working around youth centers? Is your function rehabilitation?

2. As a public official, can you accept gifts?

3. As a manager, should you serve as a "collection agency?"

4. How responsive should a secular organization be to pressure from religious factions?

5. What is your responsibility to enforce the law? How will planting a "stoolie" affect your relationship with the young people who attend youth center functions?

6. What guidelines should you have for accepting tax-write-off gifts?

7. What guidelines can be established for dealing with adverse publicity?

8. To what degree should one be influenced by political pressure?

9. How responsive should public organizations be to pressure from minority groups?

10. What are the responsibilities of a manager with regard to the morals of his subordinates?